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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 THE HAGUE 000073

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [EAID](#) [AF](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR VERVEER ENGAGES DUTCH ON AFGHANISTAN,  
WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT

REF: A. 09 THE HAGUE 718

[1](#)B. 09 THE HAGUE 663

Classified By: Ambassador Fay Levin for reasons 1.4(b,d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues Melanne Verveer advanced U.S. priorities in a two-day visit to the Netherlands January 13-14. With Dutch cabinet members and working-level officials, she emphasized U.S. interests in maintaining the Dutch commitment to Afghanistan while exploring future cooperation (para 2-4). With the Afghan Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs, the Ambassador compared notes on Afghanistan politics and expressed support for Kakar's efforts (para 5). A leading women's magazine with a large, politically active audience will publish an interview with the Ambassador as its leading story (para 6). The Ambassador built bridges with South Asian and Dutch NGOs through two dinner events and a conference speech to 120 people (para 7-9). Ambassador's schedule is included at paragraph 10. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) FM VERHAGEN: Verhagen and Verveer, joined by Ambassador Levin, met for 30 minutes at the Dutch Foreign Ministry. Verveer thanked the FM for his overall commitment to U.S.-Dutch relations, the Dutch-U.S. event during the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2009 to combat violence against girls, and his support for women in Afghanistan. On Afghanistan, the FM noted his full support for participation by women representatives at the January 28 conference in London, including a chance to address the full conference. Asked about how to support a continued Dutch military presence in Afghanistan after 2010, Verhagen suggested telling Development Minister Koenders about the important link between the Dutch military presence and assisting women. (NOTE: Verhagen supports an extension of the Dutch military mission, but the full Dutch government is still deliberating on the issue. For background on the military decision by the GONL, see reftel A and B. END NOTE.) On women's issues generally, Verhagen emphasized his strong support for advancing women's rights, and his concern about responding to challenges to the universality of human rights based on religion. Verhagen asked about the timing of U.S. ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Verhagen also expressed his support for Dutch Major General Cammaert to head the UN's new gender entity; Verveer responded that he gave impressive testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. (NOTE: Verhagen and Levin's discussion of Venezuela is reported separately, The Hague 42. END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (C) DEVELOPMENT MINISTER KOENDERS: Koenders and Ambassadors Verveer and Levin met for 50 minutes at the Peace Palace in The Hague. Verveer expressed appreciation for Dutch generosity in development aid, support for women's rights, and leadership in Uruzgan province Afghanistan. On Afghanistan, Koenders said the Dutch would continue with a PRT in Afghanistan or a military deployment elsewhere in Afghanistan. Koenders agreed with Levin that there is a link between security and development but said the "form" of Dutch

military assistance will be different after 2010. Security in Uruzgan will depend on which ISAF member state is providing security, and the Dutch will work with whoever is there. Koenders wants to ensure, however, that the Dutch "3D" approach of development, diplomacy and defense continues. Koenders was impressed by General McChrystal's emphasis on human rights and development as keys to his success. (NOTE: This is the same position Koenders' Labor Party has followed over the last few months, as reported in reftels. END NOTE.) Koenders emphasized the West needs to empower women in Afghanistan and give them a more central role in development and peace-making. More broadly, Koenders said he saw little difference between the Netherlands' approach and the American development policy described by Secretary Clinton on January 6. He is "very impressed with the new administration" and welcomed the idea of expanding cooperation, especially on millennium development goals, reproductive rights and the UN gender entity. Koenders expressed his support for Cammaert to head the UN gender entity.

¶4. (C) WORKING-LEVEL MEETINGS AT DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTRY: In four meetings over four hours, Ambassador Verveer met Dutch MFA officials to discuss U.S. policy and explore options for cooperation. (NOTE: The Netherlands is the world's sixth largest aid donor. END NOTE.) Arjan Hamburger, Human Rights Ambassador; Maryem van den Heuvel, Deputy Director of the Human Rights Department; and Senior Policy Officer Adriaan Versluis described the work of the MFA Human Rights Division, which has an 80 million euro annual budget, of which about 25 million euros is managed by Dutch embassies. Hamburger and Van den Heuvel expressed appreciation for their recent

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consultations in Washington concerning the Human Rights Council, which underscores the universality of human rights, which are not circumscribed by culture or religion. Koen Davidse, Director of the Peacebuilding Division, noted his close consultations with S/CRS Ambassador Herbst. Davidse wants to avoid focusing on "the last war" and plan better for future contingencies. On Afghanistan, Davidse agreed security is a major concern but said the decision on the Dutch military deployment was "above (his) pay grade." With the MFA Gender Division, the Dutch explained the new office in the Human Rights Department had been moved out of development cooperation to reflect the political priority and nature of women's issues. With 25 MFA employees over a "brown bag lunch," the Ambassador described the role of her office, priorities for the United States, and efforts to improve U.S. aid planning. Participants enthusiastically welcomed the presentation and shared ideas from Afghanistan, Rwanda, and Tanzania.

¶5. (U) DEPUTY MINISTER KAKAR: In a 30-minute discussion over coffee, Verveer expressed support for Kakar's work. Kakar was uncertain about prospects for President Karzai winning approval of his most recent cabinet nominees.

¶6. (U) PRESS INTERVIEW: Ambassador Verveer spoke with the Chief Editor of women's magazine Opzij (circulation 85,000). Opzij is the only Dutch opinion monthly for women. Its readership is predominantly well educated and economically well off women ages 25-50. Post expects the interview to be published as its leading story in February.

¶7. (U) DINNER AT PARLIAMENT: Ambassador Verveer attended a dinner hosted in the Dutch parliament cafeteria by Chantal Gill'ard, Labor Party MP, for Dutch MPs and South Asian delegates in town for an Afghanistan conference. While MP attendance was limited by a developing Dutch cabinet crisis, Ambassador Verveer enjoyed the opportunity for candid conversations in an informal setting with the conference delegates, some of whom she knew from Afghanistan.

¶8. (U) "FLASH POINT" CONFERENCE: Before an audience of approximately 120 representatives from NGOs, the diplomatic

corps, and Dutch officials, Ambassador Verveer gave a keynote address on the "global context" of advancing the position of women in political, social and economic terms. Minister Koenders opened the conference, entitled "Women at the Flash Point: 2010 and Beyond, Women's Voices from Afghanistan and the Neighboring Countries," followed by speeches from Ambassador Verveer and Deputy Minister Kakar. The conference then included two panel discussions -- the first with women delegates from South Asia, and the second with Ambassadors from the UK, Pakistan, Australia posted to The Hague. Dutch MP Chantal Gill'ard gave concluding remarks. More details about the conference are available from Embassy The Hague and the conference sponsor, Gender Concerns International, at: [www.genderconcerns.org](http://www.genderconcerns.org).

19. (U) DINNER WITH LEADING DUTCH WOMEN: Amsterdam CG hosted a dinner in Ambassador Verveer's honor with eight leading women in Dutch politics, civil society, and academia (participants listed in para 10, biographies and further information available from Embassy The Hague). They exchanged views on how the role of women differs across cultures, and the opportunities and challenges to women's empowerment that those cultural differences engender. Arinda Callewaert, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Women's organization, noted that the Christian Democratic Appeal (the leading Dutch political party that her organization represents) retains a difficult, patriarchal hierarchy for women leaders to access. Turkish-born lawyer Famile Arslan and Iraqi-born lawyer Laila al-Zwaini noted the cultural challenges that career-oriented Muslim women continue to face -- whether in the Middle East or Western Europe -- but welcomed the great strides that they had made in recent years. The guests agreed with Ambassador Verveer on the importance of promoting women's rights and economic empowerment around the world, and they briefed her on their organizations' work in these areas.

10. (U) AMBASSADOR VERVEER SCHEDULE:

Wednesday, January 13  
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Discussion with Dutch MFA employees, "The importance of gender in U.S. foreign policy"

Arjan Hamburger, Human Rights Ambassador, and  
Maryem van den Heuvel, Deputy Director of Human Rights  
Division

Koen Davidse, Director of Peacebuilding Division

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Discussion with Dutch MFA Gender Division

Dinner with Chantal Gill'ard, Labor Party MP &  
representatives from South Asia participating in a conference  
the next day

Thursday, January 14  
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Afghan Deputy Minister for Women's Affairs Palwasha Kakar

Dutch Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen

Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Bert Koenders

Speech at "Flash Point" Conference on Women in Afghanistan

Press Interview

Dinner with leading Dutch women:

--Daphne Riupassa, Director, PaFemme  
--Arinda Callewaert, Chair, Christian Democrats Women's

Council

--Marije Laffeber, International Secretary, Dutch Labor Party  
--Laila al Zwaini, Dutch-Iraqi lawyer, human rights advocate  
--Famile Arslan, Dutch-Turkish lawyer, womens' rights advocate  
--Petra Stienen, former Dutch diplomat  
--Jannet Vaessen, managing director of WOMEN Inc  
--Gloria Wekker, Professor of Gender Studies, Utrecht  
University  
LEVIN